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Security Comes First

(From The Detroit News)

Senator SYMINGTON's threat to make public the secret estimates of the Central Intelligence Agency perforce raises the question of whether he is motivated more by anxiety for the national defense than the desire to make hay in an election year.

The doubt is justifiable only because he swung this club in an open session, whence it was bound to carry to the country. The senator was wroth because of recent days he has heard Defense Secretary GATES, and other witnesses, downgrade the Soviet threat in long-range missiles, and according to his reading of a classified CIA paper on this subject, the menace is proportionately greater than was thought at this time last year.

If the object was to gain attention, he made his point. The implication is there that the Administration is practicing a dangerous deception, which SYMINGTON can prove, if he breaches security.

Whether anything more than that may be said for his case is doubtful. Intelligence estimates are by nature vague, and range over 360 degrees, covering all possibilities. Therefore, as related to any situation they may usually be read two ways.

Thus should SYMINGTON play fast and loose with security matter to indict the Administration, its defenders have the choice of keeping silent or spreading more official secrets on the public record. Of this, there could be no end, once the dam is broken, and the ultimate gain to Soviet intelligence becomes immeasurable.

In trying to stop SYMINGTON, Senator BUSH (R., Conn.) voiced the lament that our system seems incapable of keeping anything secret. To that, amen.

FER

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*Sci 1 H S. + Pres in
1- Sec 5 Comp & Cons
1- Cg 2
1- Pres 2 S Symington*